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WESTERN RENDEZVOUS OF ART

Not even a troubled economy could keep art lovers from having a great time with the Montana Historical Society and the Northwest Rendezvous Group of artists (NWR) at the 31st Western Rendezvous of Art in Helena Aug. 20-23.

“Our attendance numbers were up for the event, especially for those who came to view the art exhibit itself,” Sue Near, who coordinates the event for the Society, said. “Close to 1,000 people viewed the art show. We are heartened by the response to the changes we’ve made to Rendezvous, and believe that we are poised to see this great art event continue to grow as the economy recovers.”

Art sales for the four-day event totaled \$311,750. The Quick Draw and auction at the historic Sieben Ranch near Helena saw sales of \$94,150.

The Society moved the show to the Red Lion Colonial Hotel this year and added new features such as track lighting to better show off the art. Near said the Helena community’s support of the event remains high.

“We are grateful to all our wonderful sponsors and volunteers who are indispensable in mounting a big event like this,” Near said.

“The artists of the NWR were very pleased with the new venue this year,” said NWR President Frank Montibeller. “They feel the new partnership between the Montana Historical Society and the NWR is a great one and will continue to grow and prosper over the coming years.”

On a sad note, the absence of longtime NWR artist Joe Halko of Choteau, Mont., who died last March, was noted by all. Halko received a moving tribute at the Gala Rendezvous Banquet.

Society Director Richard Sims announced that the Legacy Award was given posthumously to Halko for the collection he had completed for the show. “These exceptional pieces present a wonderful representation of Joe’s work and make a fitting addition to the Society’s permanent collection in every way,” Sims said. “We only wish Joe could be here to receive his award – he is missed by all of us.”

Montana Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger, Helena Mayor Bob Smith and the Helena Ambassadors were among the dignitaries that welcomed Rendezvous attendees from across the nation to the show.

Artist’s awards at this year’s event:

- John Scott People Choice Awards voted on by all those who attend the show – Painting Laura Robb for “Crimson Poppies.” Sculpture Gerald Balciar for “Follow the Leader.”
- Ben Stahl Artist’s Choice Award voted on by NWR artists for the overall best collection of works at the show – Matt Smith.
- Awards of Merit voted on by NWR artists – Bye Bitney for “Fishing Lesson,” Barry Eisenach for “Two Horse Mountain Mowing Machine,” Jim Morgan for “A Winter Evening,” Matt Smith for “Sunrise over Ediza,” and Milo “Skip” Whitcomb for “Horse Creek Split.”
- Heritage Award for piece of art most reflective of the spirit of western history – Barry Eisenach for “Two Horse Mountain Mowing Machine.”

- Legacy Award selected by the Montana Historical Society and added to its permanent collection – Joe Halko “Headed for the Highwoods,” Busy Banties,” and “Summer Sandhill.”

Winners of the Rendezvous raffle were: Perri Walborn of Helena one of a kind brooch in the shape of a boot with diamond and sapphires from Saunders Jewelry, Gen Morgan wine basket from Island Liquors and Wines, Ted Brodowy of Helena wagon ride dinner for two from Bruce Anfinson’s Last Chance Ranch, and Vicki Smith of Helena book basket from Montana Book and Toy Company.